

Helping Children Learn®

Tips Families Can Use to Help Children Do Better in School

Harvard Elementary School

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL



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Make sure your child finds the balance with school and activities

Parents want their children to have every opportunity in life. But when they're over-scheduled, kids sometimes struggle to keep everything in order.

To strike a balance for your child:

- **Remember that academics come first.** Extracurricular activities are a great addition, but not when they come at the expense of her schoolwork.
- **Talk to her about her schedule.** Does she feel like she's doing too much? Is she enjoying the activities she does?
- **Notice your child's reactions.** Does she complain about certain activities? Does she always seem tired? These are red flags.
- **Schedule family time.** Make sure you have time every day to spend together and to fully focus on each other.
- **Schedule down time.** It's important for your child to have enough free time to read, play and daydream.
- **Build character.** Choose activities that teach fundamental values—and activity leaders who do, too.



Source: J. Taylor, "Are you enriching or overscheduling your child?" Today.com, <http://today.msnbc.msn.com/id/32544451/ns/today-parenting/t/are-you-enriching-or-overscheduling-your-child/>.



Get informed to prevent cheating

Unfortunately, cheating often begins in elementary school. Learn about cheating, and help your child understand that it is a serious matter. It helps to know that:

- **Cheating can be confusing.** Research shows that although children may believe it's wrong, they may think it's okay on some tasks.
- **Cheating is more common** than people think. Cheating has risen dramatically in the past 50 years. And it's more tolerated by today's society.
- **Peer pressure influences** cheating. When someone suggests cheating (such as by asking to copy homework), it's tough to say no.
- **Too much parent pressure** increases cheating. Tell your child that working hard and being honest is much more important than getting a certain grade.

Source: "Cheating is a Personal Foul," Educational Testing Service, <http://tinyurl.com/5smux>.

Choosing builds responsibility

Learning how to make responsible decisions takes practice. As often as possible, let your child make choices within the limits you have set.

She can choose things like:

- **What** vegetable you'll have with dinner. Does she want salad or green beans?
- **When** she wants to do homework. Right after school or after dinner?



Why consistent attendance matters for success

Make daily attendance a family habit. Missing even a few days of school can be harmful.

Research shows that students with many absences in kindergarten struggle in first grade. Even worse, those same children were still struggling to keep up when they reached fifth grade—and beyond.

Every day's learning builds on the day before. When a child misses a lesson, he misses a critical building block that can lead to problems for the next few days and weeks.

Remember: When you send your child off to school, you're helping him today, tomorrow—and for the rest of his school career.

Source: *Racial Disparities in Minnesota Basic Standards Test Scores*, Roy Wilkins Center for Human Relations and Social Justice, University of Minnesota.

Persistence is a powerful tool

Pushing forward—even when it's tough—is a key to success. Help your child be persistent by:

- **Breaking big goals** into small parts.
- **Discussing times** he's succeeded by being persistent.
- **Complimenting efforts** as well as end results.





How can I help my child be more organized?

Q: I wondered why I hadn't heard about school events that other parents knew about. Then I opened my son's backpack. There were crumpled-up papers, a dirty t-shirt and a smushed-up dessert. His chronic disorganization is affecting his school work—he loses things and can't find what he needs. How can I help him get on track?

A: There are costs to disorganization, as you and your son are already discovering. Luckily, organizational skills can be taught.

Talk with your son about why you're going to try to help him get organized. Remind him of the problems he's faced in the past. Wouldn't he like to find his assignments when he needs to turn them in?

Start by giving the backpack a thorough cleaning. Uncrumple the wads of paper. Together, decide what's important and what can be tossed. (You can also sign and have your child return the three forms the teacher is probably waiting for.)

Get a folder for each subject. Color code them so he can remember that green = science, and blue = math. Everything for that subject goes in the folder.

While he's getting used to the new routine, you'll have to help him. Do daily checks so he can get in the habit of putting things where they belong. He might never be super organized, but he'll be able to find his math homework!



Are you helping your child love math?

It's important for kids to get a solid foundation in math. Are you helping your child learn to love math (even if you don't)? Answer *yes* or *no* to each question:

___ **1. Do you look** for ways to use math every day? Count the steps to the bus stop. Add numbers on license plates.

___ **2. Do you cook** together to practice making accurate measurements?

___ **3. Do you assure** your child that the key to learning math is sticking with it?

___ **4. Do you invent** math problems based on favorite stories? If each of the Seven Dwarves drank two cups of water at dinner, how many glasses would Snow White pour?

___ **5. Do you make** a game out of learning math facts? How fast can your child multiply 9×7 ?

How did you do?

Each *yes* answer means you're helping your child learn to love math. For each *no* answer, try that idea from the quiz.

"The parents exist to teach the child, but they also must learn what the child has to teach them; and the child has a very great deal to teach them."

—Arnold Bennett

Examples can teach respect

You want your child to respect herself and others. Respect is an essential trait to learn for success in school—and life. You can:

- **Discuss respect.** Ask, "What is respect? Why is it important?"
- **Set an example.** Let your child see you treat others with respect.
- **Have your child think** about behavior she sees on TV or in books. Is it respectful? What can she learn from it?

Source: "Safe & Respectful Relationships for All," SAFEANDRESPECTFUL.ORG, www.safeandrespectful.org/parents.html.

Solving problems can boost your child's self-esteem

Whether it's a disagreement with a friend or forgetting his math homework at home, it's important to let your child learn how to solve problems—without saving the day for him.

When your child has a minor dilemma, encourage him to work towards solving it on his own. This will teach him:

- **To work** with others.
- **About responsibility.**
- **That he is capable** of solving problems.

Source: "Family Key to Building Child's Self-Esteem," Picnic Point PTA, www.picnicpointpta.org/linksforparents.htm.

Give your child the 'write' stuff to succeed

Learning to write well will boost your child's confidence. She'll be able to express her feelings and ideas. Her thinking skills will improve, too, because she must organize her ideas to write.



To give your child writing practice, have her try:

- **Writing in a journal.**
- **Making lists.**
- **Writing down what she observes.**

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